

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

A critical investigation into the way in which art works demonstrate and contribute to the construction and changing perceptions of national identity in Australia as reflected in the public collections and institutions responsible for collecting and displaying these art works

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October 2010

This thesis discusses the means by which the collection and exhibition of art works, primarily by Australian public collections and institutions, reflect and construct national identity, whether consciously or unconsciously. Cultural history and 'national identity' have become areas of particular interest in the available literature as there has been a significant re-evaluation of Australian history in recognition of the fact that a single linear account of history no longer provides an accurate version of the Australian story. This shift has been largely due to societal and political changes in the Australian communities which have facilitated the recognition of diverse groups and the telling of their own stories. This account looks at five major areas of interest – the role of museums, landscape, portraiture, Indigenous art and contemporary art in Australia. Art museums, their acquisition, exhibiting and publication policies and practices, clearly contribute in some formative way, to the images and dialogues around how Australians see themselves domestically and internationally, and to the image projected overseas through the visual arts. Critical and public responses have not always been positive, especially from some of the more conservative commentators, despite the best attempts of art-practitioners and advocates.

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Alisan Dunn", is positioned above a horizontal line.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A number of people have given generously of their time to assist me with my research for this thesis.

I would like to express my gratitude to the following individuals:

- Ms Katrina Lumley, Curator, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, N.S.W.
- Ms Sue Backhouse, Curator of Art, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania
- Ms Diana Harrison, Assistant Director, The Salamanca Collection, Hobart, Tasmania
- Ms Jane Stewart, Director, Devonport Regional Art Gallery, Devonport, Tasmania
- Mr Euan Hills, Director of ARTMOB Aboriginal Fine Art, Hobart, Tasmania

I would also like to thank Dr Heather Goodall who took on the role as supervisor for her encouragement and feedback.

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